



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OPERATION ICE STORM
JURY CONVICTS JOPLIN MAN
IN MULTI-KILO METH CONSPIRACY

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Bradley J. Schlozman, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced today that a Joplin, Mo., man has been convicted by a federal jury for his role in a conspiracy to distribute 15 kilograms or more of methamphetamine in southwest Missouri.

“Operation Ice Storm was a long-term investigation into the illegal distribution of large quantities of methamphetamine in southwest Missouri,” Schlozman said. “Methamphetamine and Ice – a highly potent form of meth – was transported into Missouri from Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Texas by female couriers who were paid to fly between the states with the drugs strapped under their clothes.”

Emmanuel Rodriguez, 27, of Joplin, was found guilty of participating in a conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine in Jasper County, Mo., from August 2002 to Sept. 20, 2004.

“This defendant was one of the leaders of this criminal conspiracy, which is tied to the Mexican Mafia. This conviction, along with the earlier guilty pleas by nine co-defendants, makes a significant dent in the methamphetamine traffic through this part of the state.”

Following the presentation of evidence, the jury in U.S. District Court in Springfield deliberated less than an hour before returning the guilty verdicts to U.S. District Judge Richard E. Dorr on Wednesday afternoon, ending a trial that began Monday.

In addition, Schlozman said, **Rodriguez** will forfeit to the government any property used facilitate the conspiracy or that was derived from the proceeds of the conspiracy, including \$3,002 seized at the time of his arrest, \$5,352 seized from his residence and a 2000 Lincoln Navigator.

Rodriguez is among 10 co-defendants who have been convicted on charges contained in an Oct. 14, 2004, federal indictment.

* **Ricki J. Gomez**, 38, of Carthage, was sentenced on March 29, 2006, to four years and nine months in federal prison without parole. On Sept. 1, 2005, **Gomez** pleaded guilty to being in possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine. **Gomez** was stopped by Webb City, Mo., police officers on June 6, 2004. During the traffic stop, officers seized 54.85 grams of methamphetamine, which was 75 percent pure, and \$9,559. **Gomez** admitted that she intended to distribute some or all of the methamphetamine to another person. **Gomez** also admitted that the money in her possession was obtained from the proceeds of methamphetamine sales. **Gomez** also admitted that she was in possession of 10.57 grams of methamphetamine at her residence on Sep. 20, 2004.

* **Roberto Rodriguez**, 31, formerly of Jasper County, pleaded guilty on Feb. 15, 2006, to participating in a conspiracy to distribute at least five kilograms, but less than 15 kilograms, of methamphetamine from August 2002 to Sept. 20, 2004, in Jasper County and elsewhere in southwest Missouri.

* **Jeffrey S. Bateman**, 36, of Joplin, pleaded guilty on Feb. 3, 2006, to his role in the methamphetamine conspiracy. **Bateman** also pleaded guilty to being in possession of a .22-caliber Titan handgun on Feb. 6, 2003, for the purpose of furthering and facilitating his drug distribution activities. Under federal law, Schlozman explained, it is illegal to possess a firearm during or in relation to a drug trafficking crime. When law enforcement officers arrested **Bateman** following a traffic stop on Feb. 6, 2003, he had a large knife concealed under his duster-style coat as well as an empty black holster, approximately 36.01 grams of methamphetamine concealed in his underclothing, and \$1,315 in his wallet. Law enforcement officers found the handgun inside the vehicle, under the center armrest.

* **Ronald D. Preston**, 34, of Joplin, was sentenced on Nov. 10, 2005, to 15 years and eight months in federal prison without parole. On April 13, 2005, **Preston** pleaded guilty to his role in the conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine.

* **Roy Rodriguez**, 21, address unknown, pleaded guilty on Jan. 31, 2006, to participating in the methamphetamine conspiracy and to being in possession of a Titan .25-caliber handgun and five rounds of ammunition on Jan. 14, 2004, in connection with the drug trafficking offense. **Rodriguez** also admitted that he assaulted a federal grand jury witness, for which he has been charged in a separate case. **Rodriguez** assaulted the witness, stole his car, and stole property from his car, Schlozman said, in retaliation for that witness' testimony about the drug trafficking conspiracy. Under the terms of the plea agreement, **Rodriguez** agrees to pay restitution to that victim and agrees that, at the time of sentencing, he should be subject to a sentencing enhancement for obstruction of justice. In exchange, the government will dismiss the federal indictment in that separate case. **Rodriguez** also agreed that he should be subject to a sentencing enhancement for obstruction of justice because he led law enforcement officers on a high-speed pursuit on May 19, 2005, as he fled to avoid arrest. **Rodriguez** also attempted to flee from officers attempting to arrest him on June 17, 2005, when he struck an officer's patrol car with his

vehicle, thereby causing damage to the patrol car.

* **Marcus Glover**, 26, of Joplin, pleaded guilty to participating in the methamphetamine conspiracy on Jan. 26, 2006.

* **Victor M. Gomez-Coronado**, 34, a citizen of Mexico, pleaded guilty to participating in the methamphetamine conspiracy on Jan. 11, 2006. The government contends that **Gomez-Coronado** was a leader of the drug trafficking organization, and that he possessed a firearm in connection to the drug trafficking offense.

* **Jacquelyn M. Witt**, 21, of Carthage, Mo., pleaded guilty on April 18, 2005, to her role in the conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine.

* **Amy C. Lawrence**, 22, of Joplin, pleaded guilty on July 8, 2005, to her role in the conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Robyn L. McKee and Dave Rush. The case was investigated by the Jasper County Drug Task Force, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Joplin, Mo., Police Department, the Carthage, Mo., Police Department, the Jasper County, Mo., Sheriff's Department, the Jasper County, Mo., Metropolitan Police Department, the Carterville, Mo., Police Department, the Newton County, Mo., Sheriff's Department, the Missouri State Highway Patrol, the Central Oklahoma Metro Interdiction Team and the Texas Department of Public Safety.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

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